

Charity advertising: For or against people with a mental handicap?

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This research investigated whether it is possible for charity advertising campaigns to stimulate donations successfully as well as to represent people with disabilities as valued human beings. Thirty-eight subjects were required to rank 10 MENCAP posters along 15 bipolar constructs using a variation of the Q sort procedure. Constructs included feelings such as pity, guilt and sympathy, constructive helping behaviours such as giving money and time, and perceptions such as having rights, value and capabilities.

Correlational, cluster and factor analyses suggest that images which elicit the greatest commitment to give money are those most closely associated with feelings of guilt, sympathy and pity and are negatively associated with posters which illustrate people with a mental handicap as having the same rights, value and capability as non-handicapped persons. The implications of these findings with regard to advertising and the principle of normalization (social role valorization) are discussed.

In the current climate of personal and private enterprise we are seeing a conscious push towards a philosophy of personal philanthropy and increasing reliance on charitable organizations rather than state subsidy for disadvantaged people.

Mrs Thatcher has been at the forefront of a campaign to restore charities to their predominant Victorian role. In an April appeal for more funds for the NHS, she declared, 'When you have finished as a taxpayer you have not finished your duty as a citizen . . .'

Through political statements and fiscal measures, a climate is being created in which charities and private enterprise are being expected to do things previously done by the state. Managers of the Social Fund are expected to advise claimants to apply to charity if the Fund cannot meet their needs (*Guardian*, 4 September 1988).

The charities, therefore, find themselves in the position of commercial businesses competing for a foothold in the marketplace, only in their case it is to stimulate donations rather than to sell commodities. However, the need for similar commercial promotion is apparent, both to raise the profile and public awareness of the particular charity as well as to get people to part with their money. In this respect an interesting contrast is noted by

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Thomas & Wolfensberger (1982). Whereas in business and industry products are promoted in the best possible light, in human services there appears to be an assumption that the type of images most likely to prove effective are those which evoke feelings of pity and guilt in the perceiver. For example, a poster issued by the Royal Society for Mentally Handicapped Children and Adults (MENCAP) shows a young girl with Down's syndrome bearing the caption, 'Twenty children born on Christmas day will always have a cross to bear' with a request for donations in the small print. Similarly, the logos used by many charities also carry implicit images of pathos, dependence and helplessness. The consequence is the frequent appearance in the media of images of people with handicaps which stress their differentness, helplessness and dependency, in other words, attributes which confirm a negative stereotype. In a survey of promotional material (leaflets, booklets and posters) distributed by disability agencies in Ireland, McCormack & Fitzpatrick (1987) found that two-thirds of the material presented people negatively when judged using the the United Nations guidelines on improving communication about people with disabilities.

Such imagery is not restricted to charity appeals. Wertheimer (1988 *a*) found a very mixed picture in a review of over 900 advertisements for staff positions in services for people with learning difficulties (mental handicap), and in a further study on press reporting she noted a predominance of news stories about fund-raising events which depicted people with learning difficulties in passive and dependent roles or as victims (Wertheimer, 1988 *b*).

A wide range of attitudes towards people with a mental handicap is to be found in the general public. McCormack (1986) amongst others points out that public attitudes are confused and even contradictory but the majority are not extremely prejudiced. A MORI poll conducted for MENCAP (1982) indicated considerable confusion between mental handicap and mental illness. The predominant attitude measured in the poll was feelings of sympathy (70 per cent of those questioned) followed by 'sadness' and 'acceptance'. Half the sample claimed to know a person with mental handicap, and more favourable attitudes were found within this subgroup. Of these, 67 per cent favoured community care; however, substantial numbers expressed concern that mentally handicapped neighbours might not receive adequate professional care, that they may be ridiculed and/or harm local people. Pittock & Potts (1988) in a study of neighbours found a common view of mentally handicapped people as being affectionate and happy but in need of supervision. It can be seen, therefore, that public impressions contain a mix of positive attitudes (in favour of community care, integrated education), negative attitudes (mentally handicapped people as dangerous or violent) and 'sympathetic' attitudes. This sympathy can be viewed both positively and negatively. It is positive, perhaps, in terms of promoting charitable donations from the public, but negative in that it reflects the patronizing, distancing and marginalization of one group of individuals by another. It could be argued that the identification and labelling of people with disabilities through the use of posters actually establishes 'the disabled' as an out-group. As the work of Tajfel, Billig & Bundy (1971) has shown, the mere division into groups is a sufficient condition for discriminatory behaviours to occur. Where there is perceived competition, for example, as there might be if the poster's message is about equal employment opportunity for disabled people, then it is likely that this will turn into prejudice. However, it is just these sorts of messages that we would be guided towards by the normalization principle.

The principle of normalization has been developed over the last two decades as a conceptual framework around which to shape developments in human services. It proposes an explicit aim of using 'culturally valued means in order to enable, establish and/or maintain valued roles for people' who have traditionally been devalued and rejected by society in general and human service agencies in particular (Wolfensberger, 1972; Wolfensberger & Thomas, 1981, 1983). There are a number of attributes of people with a mental handicap which Wolfensberger would maintain lead to their social deviancy in Western culture: physical differences and/or bodily impairments, behavioural idiosyncrasies and reduced competencies. In addition to these inherent factors, the life-experiences of this group (such as experiences of segregation in residential and educational institutions with the concomitant reduced opportunities for learning through role models) are also, frequently, the cause of greater devaluation and stigmatization. In the light of this, 'The overall normalization goals for a human service (especially one for devalued people) are the enhancement of the social image and the competencies of their (devalued) clients' (Wolfensberger & Thomas, 1983, p. 31).

Wolfensberger & Thomas (1983) stress the powerful role of symbols and imagery in the development of positive and negative value judgements. Language is one such set of symbols and visual imagery another. When one image is juxtaposed to another entity (person, object, place or image) then associations may take place and the meaning of one image can be transferred to another: '. . . a transfer phenomenon exists whereby the meanings, sentiments, values, etc., attached to one place, person, idea, or symbol can become attached to another entity which is juxtaposed to it' (Wolfensberger & Thomas, 1983, p. 33). This is the mechanism favoured by commercial advertisers; for example, tobacco is given sex appeal by associating the pipe smoker with being pursued by hordes of attractive women as in the *St Bruno* television advertisement. However, the transfer phenomenon works equally in the formation of negative associations, and Wolfensberger & Thomas maintain that human services are replete with examples of negative associations, many of which may be totally unconscious – for example, the application to people with mental handicap of training procedures borrowed from the animal laboratory, or the siting of residential services in the run-down parts of town or near to cemeteries. They suggest, therefore, that in order to redress the balance, it is necessary for service developers to be aware of the 'role of unconsciousness' and actively to seek, for example, to use high status image associations (Wolfensberger & Thomas, 1983).

This emphasis on the dynamics and relevance of social imagery is particularly apposite to the subject of charity advertising. Appeals, like an advertising campaign, make liberal use of image juxtaposition and as such have the opportunity to create either positive or negative image associations. Some of the core themes of normalization have particular relevance to the subject of charity and the use of promotional posters. The theory appears heavily influenced by Mead's (1934) 'looking-glass self' where the self is formed out of the reflected appraisals of other people and McCall & Simmons' (1966) improvisational model, and thus much emphasis is given to the 'role expectancy and role circularity' in deviancy making or, in other words, the process of the 'self-fulfilling prophecy'. That is to say people, or groups of people, especially those in a position of dependency, will act in the manner expected of them. This reinforces such expectations in the future and, as a result, they are denied the opportunity to change those role expectations. For example, people labelled 'ineducable' will not be given educational opportunities, will become still less

competent and thereby further justify the label of 'ineducable'. Role expectancies can be conveyed to and about people in the use of language, and by the images or symbols – or even other people – that are juxtaposed to them. Clearly, an advertisement has a powerful potential for presenting, in enduring form, these image associations. An example is the MENCAP poster showing two little boys (presumably brothers) with the captions 'Matthew is going to university when he is 18' but Kevin (who has Down's syndrome) is 'going nowhere'. The caption 'Kevin's going nowhere' is a good illustration of how an appeal for money can inadvertently reinforce low expectations.

Wolfensberger (1972) identifies eight social role perceptions that are damaging to those who deviate from the norm, for example, the handicapped person as subhuman (animal, vegetable), an object of menace (criminal), object of pity and burden of charity and as an eternal child. An example of the former is a recent appeal advertisement by the Barnardo's children's charity which features the wording, 'Our son was like a caged animal. Barnardo's turned him into a little boy'. The phrase simply juxtaposes the client to the image of animal (subhuman) and incarceration (caged), the whole having echoes of the zoo (wild, dangerous animals kept separate for people to stare at). Similarly, emphasis on the 'medical model' of disability, as opposed to a social one, is common in charity appeals, thus reinforcing the social role perception of the devalued person as a 'diseased organism' with associations of ill health and incurability.

In the evaluation of service principles based upon the principle of normalization (Program Analysis of Service Systems' Implementation of Normalization Goals [PASSING]: Wolfensberger & Thomas, 1983) much emphasis is placed on the dynamics and relevance of social imagery. One of the very many ratings used in the PASSING service evaluation relates to 'image projection of service funding':

Powerful images can be conveyed by the source of the funds that support a human service . . . the names, acronyms, and abbreviations of the funding bodies . . . The perceived value of clients of a service would be enhanced if all of the above images implied that clients were rightful members of the culture, competent, of high status, filled valued social roles, etc. In order to convey such messages, funding for human services should: (a) whenever possible and appropriate, be provided as a publicly-recognized right; (b) be age-appropriate; and (c) *not carry the taint of other negative images, such as vice, incapacity, separateness, etc.* (Wolfensberger & Thomas, 1983, p. 319, italics added).

McCormack (1988) has argued that the very image of charity is devaluing; in his words it is 'a polite form of begging'. He continues, 'If we were entirely happy with this begging role, many clients could be taught to beg more effectively for themselves. Yet no matter how we mask this role in our Western society, begging ensures low status and marks the loss of personal dignity' (pp. 92–93). The very existence of charities reinforces the perception of the person with disability as an object of pity dependent upon the charity of others. While this form of 'pity perception' may be generally benevolent and accompanied by compassion, Wolfensberger points out that there is also a darker side. The appearance of a handicap has been seen as punishment for the sins of the parents or even of the child itself. The Puritan ethic of the last century has also had a distorting effect on the concept of charity as something only available to the 'deserving'. Furthermore, entitlement is only to the minimum assistance for which the recipient must demonstrate abundant gratitude. Clearly, the notion of such people having the same human rights and value as everyone else would be somewhat incompatible.

A conflict therefore becomes apparent between normalization and the increasing need

to boost donations in order to improve the quality of life of people with a mental handicap through the contribution made by the charities. The conflict is highlighted by Brian Rix (1984):

On the one hand, we must present a positive image of mentally handicapped people, to persuade the public to accept them as friends and neighbours. On the other, we must encourage the view that extra resources in the form of the state funds and voluntary donations should be made available to meet their special needs.

MENCAP (The Royal Society for Mentally Handicapped Children and Adults) has produced a variety of posters in a number of fund-raising campaigns. In a study by Stockdale & Farr (1987) samples of promotional materials from five separate charities (RNID, RNIB, Down's Children Association, Spastics Society and MENCAP) were compared for effectiveness in raising donations and qualitative assessment of attractiveness. The MENCAP posters scored poorly on both measures compared with the other charities. They were judged as being confusing and complex. By comparison the Spastics Society and DCA posters were liked for their strong, clear message and positive image. This reflects the recent shift of focus of the Spastics Society towards attitudinal change rather than fund-raising in its campaigns. The message underlying each of the images is very clear: 'Our biggest handicap is other people's attitude'.

The aim of the present study was to look at a larger sample of MENCAP posters to investigate the hypothesized conflict between images valuing people with handicaps and those eliciting donations, and to determine whether there are images compatible with both the principle of normalization and monetary donations..

Method

Subjects

Thirty-eight subjects participated in the study ranging in age from 18 to 52 years with a mean age of 25 years ($SD = 8.19$). There were 19 males and 19 females. All subjects were volunteers recruited through personal contact with the four mature student testers who resided in the community; thus, although the sample was not strictly random, it does at least roughly preserve quota proportions for gender and age.

Data were obtained on the subjects' previous contact with people with a mental handicap. Prior contact was defined as 'having *spoken* to someone with a mental handicap in the previous five years'. This was chosen as a clear behavioural criterion to ensure that subjects understood contact to mean a degree of proximity to, and at least a minimum degree of communication with, an individual with mental handicap, and to avoid the risk of ambiguity associated with terms such as 'acquainted with'. According to this criterion 21 subjects had had previous contact, 17 had none.

Materials

Ten promotional posters (Fig. 1) used by MENCAP were mounted on card as were the written constructs in order to facilitate shuffling to randomize order of presentation. A grid sheet was designed to ensure standard data collection and storage.

Design

Subjects were required to sort the 10 MENCAP posters along 15 bipolar constructs using a variation of the Q sort procedure in which the 10 posters were sorted for each construct in turn, thus giving each poster a score on that construct from 10 (most agreement with the statement) to 1. The constructs were chosen to tap a mixture of:



Figure 1. The 10 MENCAP posters used in the study.

(a) *emotional responses* towards the posters themselves

GUILT: This poster makes me feel guilty

PITY: This poster makes me feel pity

LIKE: I like this poster

AVOID: I would avoid looking at this poster

COMF: This poster makes me feel comfortable

SYMP: This poster makes me feel sympathetic towards people with a mental handicap

CHANGE: This poster would make me change my behaviour towards people with a mental handicap

(b) *anticipated helping behaviours*

MONEY: This poster makes me want to give money to MENCAP

HELP: This poster makes me actively want to help people with a mental handicap

CHARITY: This poster suggests that people with a mental handicap need our charity

TIME: This poster makes me want to spend time with people with a mental handicap

(c) *the message* embodied in the poster

RIGHTS: This poster suggests that people with a mental handicap have the same rights as everyone else

FEELINGS: This poster suggests that people with a mental handicap have the same feelings as everyone else

CAPABLE: This poster suggests that people with a mental handicap are capable

VALUE: This poster says to me that people with a mental handicap are valuable members of society.

Procedure

Subjects were tested individually and generally were seen in the privacy of their own home. The subject was instructed to place each of the 10 posters between the two cards showing the two extremes of the construct until all were finished. The order of posters and constructs was varied by random shuffling for each trial and each subject.

This procedure effectively prohibited tied rankings, and subjects were encouraged to place the posters in the way that best represented their view in spite of the difficulty of discriminating some of the middle rankings. No additional information was given to help them interpret the posters. Comments relating to the task made by subjects during and after the sorting procedure were noted. Each subject was given as much time as was needed to complete the task and most took between 1/2 and 3/4 hour. In order to check the reliability of this procedure, eight subjects were asked to repeat the procedure a second time not less than 24 hours later. Spearman's correlation coefficients between the test and retest Q sorts for these eight subjects were .82, .92, .73, .38, .65, .75, .65, .80; pooling across these subjects the overall reliability was .71.

Results*Descriptive data*

The ratings were aggregated over all subjects to give the mean ratings for the 10 posters shown in Table 1. A high score here demonstrates that the subjects thought that the construct applied to that poster, a low score that they did not. Thus they said that they would be most likely to give money to MENCAP on seeing posters 7 and 1, and least likely with posters 8 and 10. Posters 1 and 7 prompted the most sympathy, poster 10 the least. In contrast, posters 7 and 1 ranked 7th and 8th respectively on value and 6th and 7th respectively on rights. Thus the posters which were ranked highest on promoting images of people with a mental handicap as valuable members of society and having the same *rights* as everyone else (9, 10, 8 and 2) did not rank highly on money. In the same way each poster can be assessed on all of the constructs and comparisons made.

The constructs

We used correlational, cluster and factor analytic techniques to investigate the associations of constructs. These analyses were influenced by the repertory grid paradigm.

Table 1. The sort ratings for the 10 posters on the 15 constructs aggregated over all 38 subjects

	Poster									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Comfortable	2.37	5.11	5.47	4.05	5.11	4.13	4.34	4.11	5.21	5.11
Like	3.50	4.71	5.32	4.34	5.11	3.95	5.42	4.32	4.29	4.05
Sympathy	6.18	4.42	4.84	4.53	4.26	4.45	6.18	3.26	4.37	2.50
Pity	7.37	3.97	4.89	4.68	3.00	4.58	6.03	3.97	3.53	2.97
Guilty	7.21	4.34	5.50	4.61	2.92	4.32	5.08	4.55	3.68	2.82
Time	6.05	4.58	4.08	4.13	2.95	4.61	5.89	4.63	4.13	3.97
Change	6.22	4.38	3.86	4.76	2.73	4.84	4.57	4.84	4.41	4.43
Avoid	5.68	5.03	3.21	5.34	3.71	5.05	3.05	4.24	4.76	4.92
Money	6.16	3.92	5.74	3.82	4.08	3.97	6.26	3.37	4.08	3.32
Help	6.55	4.71	3.97	4.50	3.29	4.50	6.50	3.87	3.61	3.50
Valuable	3.45	4.97	2.66	4.61	3.32	4.68	3.79	5.39	5.97	5.89
Rights	3.87	5.63	3.32	4.50	3.53	3.79	4.08	5.68	5.29	5.42
Feelings	6.87	5.32	3.13	4.87	1.95	4.34	3.68	4.95	4.61	5.32
Capable	3.37	6.00	2.97	5.00	2.42	4.47	4.05	5.39	5.42	5.82
Charity	6.05	3.95	5.97	4.45	3.13	4.79	5.82	3.29	3.89	3.45

Note. A high score means the poster was judged to be like the rating pole; a low score demonstrates disagreement with the construct. Thus the posters most and least likely to promote a donation of money are posters 7 and 10, respectively.

Spearman's correlations between the constructs as applied to the 10 posters using the aggregated means are shown in Table 2. With respect to the specific line of inquiry regarding the incompatibility of promoting rights and donations with the same material, it appears that, for these poster samples at least, such doubts are valid. On the one hand, the ratings for rights, value and capable are highly positively correlated with one another. On the other hand, rights is negatively correlated with money ($-.64$) and charity ($-.45$). Value is negatively correlated with money ($-.62$), charity ($-.47$) and active help ($-.26$). Capable is similarly negatively correlated with these charitable feelings. However, it is noteworthy that active help is not so strongly negatively associated with rights, etc. as are money and charity. Furthermore, a similar patterning of associations is found with the construct time: that is, actively helping and spending time with people with a mental handicap may be a message that is more easily promoted in a way compatible with rights and value, etc.

People say that they are more prompted to give money by posters which make them feel sympathetic (.77), pity (.64) and guilt (.55). The same pattern is followed by charity. This tends to validate the supposition that in order to produce a successful poster in charity terms it is necessary to play on people's feelings of guilt and pity.

Posters that respondents liked would neither be avoided ($-.76$) nor arouse feelings of discomfort (.43). But these were the very posters which did *not* suggest that people with a mental handicap have the same feelings as any one else ($-.63$), *nor* which might prompt

Table 2. Spearman's rank correlation coefficients between the different constructs

	Comf	Like	Symp	Pity	Guilt	Time	Change	Avoid	Money	Help	Value	Rights	Feel	Capab	Char
COMF	1.00														
LIKE	.43	1.00													
SYMP	-.27	.19	1.00												
PITY	-.44	.10	.94**	1.00											
GUILT	-.38	.17	.84**	.94**	1.00										
TIME	-.65*	-.25	.54	.68	.62	1.00									
CHANGE	-.86**	-.64*	.26	.46	.38	.77*	1.00								
AVOID	-.59*	-.76**	.08	.12	.05	.24	.56*	1.00							
MONEY	.09	.31	.77**	.64*	.55	.33	-.07	-.31	1.00						
HELP	-.52	-.04	.82**	.85**	.76**	.81**	.52	.35	.45	1.00					
VALUE	.05	-.44	-.62*	-.57*	-.56*	.02	.18	.21	-.62*	-.26	1.00				
RIGHTS	-.16	-.20	-.51	-.37	-.26	.20	.23	.17	-.64*	-.03	.81**	1.00			
FEEL	-.46	-.63*	-.10	.02	.09	.40	.53	.69*	-.40	.34	.48	.65*	1.00		
CAPAB	.06	-.28	-.48	-.44	-.40	.03	.09	.29	-.66*	-.04	.89**	.87**	.62*	1.00	
CHAR	-.21	-.04	.91**	.89**	.80**	.52	.35	.21	.63*	.80**	-.47	-.45	.07	-.33	1.00

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; one-tailed.

them to change their behaviour ($-.64$). In other words, people liked the posters which did not challenge their attitudes. This bodes ill for posters aimed at reducing the notion of 'differentness' of people with a mental handicap.

Cluster analysis allows us to map the broad pattern of associations between the constructs. Cluster analytic techniques (Everitt, 1974; Youngman, 1979) allow the sorting of objects into classes with the similarity between objects in the same class being greater than the similarity of objects in different classes. A distance measure is an index, on which low values indicate that a pair of objects (in this case constructs) are alike with respect to the set of aspects of each (in this case the 10 posters). In this case we used the squared Euclidean distance proximity measure and applied average linkage analysis to the aggregated means. This is a hierarchical agglomerative method whereby the two most similar objects are first merged to form the first cluster; the next most similar objects or object and cluster are then linked, and this process iterates until all objects are linked. The series of steps followed in travelling from 10 clusters, each containing a single construct, to a single cluster containing all 10 constructs is illustrated in the dendrogram shown in Fig. 2. Here there are two pairs of most closely related constructs: (i) pity and guilt and (ii) time and help. Constructs in these pairs are linked by short paths, the length of the path being proportional to the distance measure. Clusters which are unrelated join up last (and rightmost) in the dendrogram with the largest distance measure. In this case the final fusion is of the top cluster (pity ... sympathy) linking with the lower one (comfortable ... avoid). The similarity between any two constructs is thus reflected in the minimum horizontal distance that must be travelled over the paths joining them in the dendrogram. There are, perhaps, four main clusters: (1) pity, guilt, time, help, money, charity and sympathy; (2) comfortable and like; (3) valuable, capable and rights; (4) change, feel and avoid. Constructive helping behaviours (money, help and time) are closely associated with sympathy and guilt, but they are far removed from portrayals of people with a mental handicap as being capable and valuable, with the same rights as others. This later construct is most closely associated with the cluster where respondents construe that people with a mental handicap have the same feelings as others, and this might prompt a change in the respondents' behaviour. However, it is these posters which also would be actively avoided.

A principal component analysis followed by varimax rotation confirms these findings. Three factors result from application of the criterion of factors having a minimum eigenvalue of 1.0. Helping behaviours and sympathetic emotions load on the first factor which explains 51 per cent of the overall variance (the factor loadings are: money .83, help .94, time .94, sympathy .82, pity .92 and guilt .85). Avoidance and discomfort (avoidance .91, change .70, feeling .75, dislike .96 and discomfort .71) load on the second (33 per cent), and valuable .85, rights .93 and capability .95 on the third (8 per cent). The four clusters from the cluster analysis show up clearly in the space defined by these first two factors. (Further details available from the authors.)

The posters

Cluster analysis was used in its more usual form to determine which objects (in this case posters) were alike with respect to the set of aspects of each (in this case the set of 15 constructs). The dendrogram (Fig. 3) demonstrates the close similarity of posters 4 and 6 and another, but closely associated, cluster of posters - 2, 9, 8 and 10. These clusters

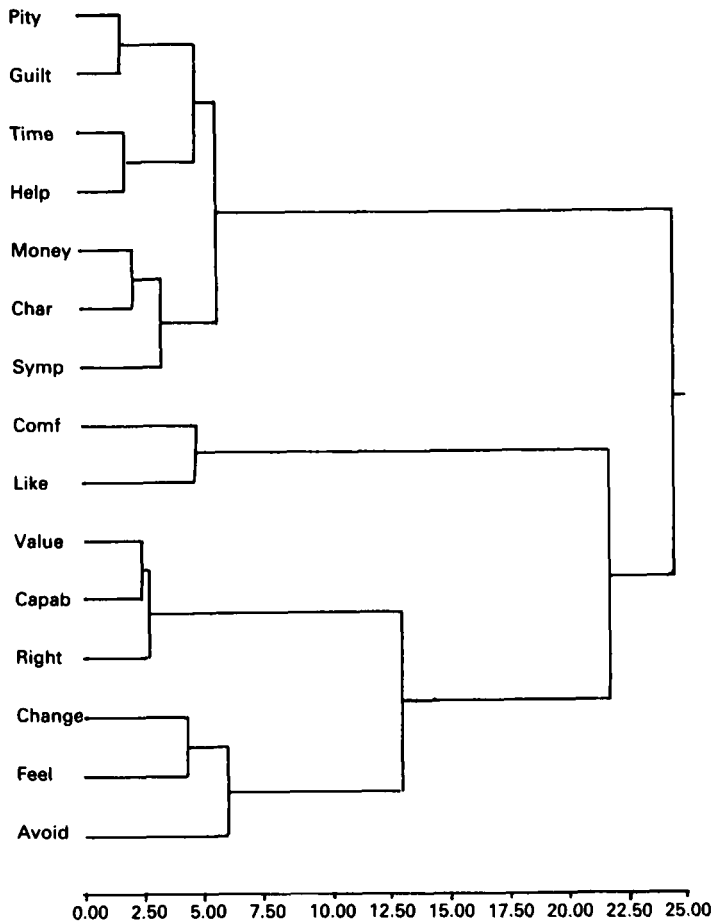


Figure 2. Dendrogram showing the clustering of the constructs (see text for details).

contain the posters which least arouse helping behaviours, pity and guilt; poster 5, which also fails to encourage these feelings, seems to lie in a different cluster because of its particular lack of content regarding feelings and capability. The other posters are essentially unrelated, with poster 1 unique in its power to promote the helping behaviours, of sympathy, pity and guilt, and an acknowledgement that people with a mental handicap have the same feelings as others.

Posters 10, 9, 2 and 8 all present images which challenge stereotypical images of adults with mental handicap. For example, poster 8 shows a man with Down's syndrome voting with the words 'ineligible' and 'eligible' above and below the picture. The implied idea of a section of society being disenfranchised is undoubtedly provocative. This is consistent with one of the dimensions used by Stockdale & Farr (1987) to interpret their results from a multidimensional scaling procedure. Posters 7, 3 and 1 are similar in so far as they all

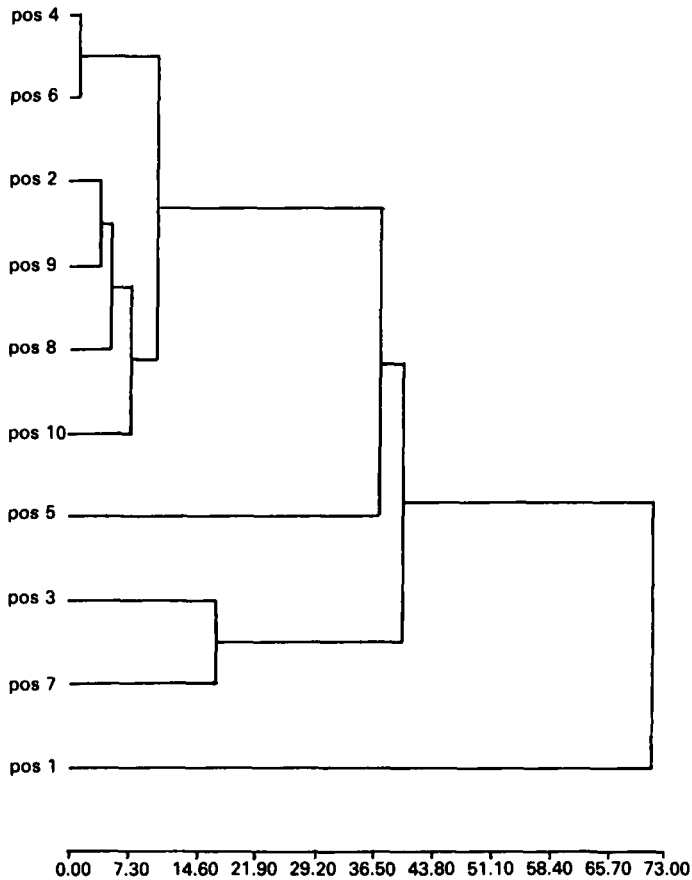


Figure 3. Dendrogram showing the clustering of the posters (see text for details).

present images of children which are commonly thought to be particularly effective in provoking public sympathy. Subjects' spontaneous comments described this poster as 'cruel and hard-hitting', 'frightening' and 'negative image'.

There may be an unfortunate confound in our present choice of posters which means that we cannot determine whether posters 7, 3 and 1 are more effective in stimulating constructive helping behaviours than those (10, 9, 2, 8) in the cluster described above because they do not challenge the conventional stereotype of people with a mental handicap or because they all show images of children. However, we believe that the most effective image, poster 1, is as challenging of stereotypes as are (10, 9, 2 and 8), albeit stereotypes concerning feelings rather than occupational ability, and furthermore that the message of poster 3 concerns the adult more than the child. As we get down to this level of analysis so we realize that the posters differ in many other respects (cartoon vs. image,

presence vs. absence of image of individual, attractiveness of image, etc.) and further research is needed with much larger samples of posters before these details can be evaluated. It is also quite likely that these factors are not simply additive but rather they will interact in complex Gestalts. We have started further studies into these issues.

Individual differences

Many studies have looked at which factors might account for different attitudes towards people with a mental handicap. The characteristics most often examined have been age, gender, educational level, socio-economic status and degree of contact. A number of reviews of the literature (e.g. Donaldson, 1980; Gottlieb, 1975; Livneh, 1982) have stressed the equivocal findings in all these areas, although there has been a tendency to find more favourable attitudes associated with females and higher educational level and socioeconomic status.

The literature regarding degree of contact is likewise inconclusive, and has led more recent researchers to examine more closely the nature of contact. At one extreme, simple exposure by an institutional tour was found to be either ineffective or actually detrimental (Cleland & Cochran, 1961; Kimbrell & Luckey, 1964; Sellin & Mulchahay, 1965). McConkey & McCormack (1983) have recently been stressing the need for structured interactional contact where attention is paid to ensuring equality of age, group status and role when introducing people with and without handicaps to each other. Opportunities for 'sanctioned staring' have also been suggested as helping the non-handicapped to be more relaxed when meeting people with handicaps for the first time.

With respect to the contact variable in the present study we agglomerated the responses from the 21 subjects with prior contact and contrasted them with the 19 without contact. When we compared the clustering of constructs in the two groups the patterns were broadly similar: in both groups there were two distinct clusters, one containing valuable, capable, rights and comfortable, the other, constructive helping behaviours (time, help, money) along with guilt, sympathy and pity: the broad pattern of the dissociation of these two themes, which was characteristic of the sample as a whole, repeats itself in these subsamples (further details of these analyses are available from the authors). The major difference between the two clusterings lay in the position of avoid which was associated with the cluster of valuable, capable, rights for the prior contact group but with constructive helping behaviours, pity and guilt in the no prior contact group. This is made clearer by the correlations of avoid with the other constructs: the prior contact group would avoid posters which portray people with a mental handicap as capable ($\rho = .74$), with the same feelings ($\rho = .42$), and rights ($\rho = .52$) as others, and those which did *not* make them feel urged to give money ($\rho = -.72$) or help ($\rho = -.29$), or which did *not* make them feel sympathy ($\rho = -.31$), pity ($\rho = -.30$) or guilt ($\rho = -.30$). In contrast, people with no prior contact would avoid the posters which *did* urge them to help ($\rho = .54$), which encouraged a change ($\rho = .57$) in their behaviour, and there was a tendency to avoid the posters which *did* make them feel pity ($\rho = .15$) and guilt ($\rho = .14$).

Further analyses (also available from the authors) contrast the correlates of constructive helping behaviour in these groups, although it must be stressed that the patterns are more broadly similar than different. Prior contact respondents tended to like the posters which prompted them to give money or help, whereas there was a negative association between

like and help, money and time for the respondents with no prior contact. In both groups there were positive correlations between constructive helping behaviours and guilt, pity and sympathy. However, there is a marked dissociation between the two groups concerning the relationship between constructive helping behaviours and the perception of the poster as portraying that people with a mental handicap have the same rights as others. In the no prior contact group this association is positive or negligible, whereas in the prior contact group there is a negative association, and this tendency is broadly replicated for feelings, valuable and capable.

It seems that those who have had prior contact have developed a stereotyped view of mentally handicapped people as being deserving of charity, help, care, etc., and the dissonance experienced when faced with an alternative picture prompted an avoidance reaction. Presumably if the nature of the contact has been to help, then this group would not wish to see its efforts as invalid and would resist the idea that people with a mental handicap do not need their help. This contrasts with the no prior contact group who feel more comfortable with images of independence because it justifies lack of action on their part. The implication, therefore, is that the prior contact group have already been motivated by guilt, pity and sympathy in order to have made that contact and are therefore a pre-selected group, i.e. it may be that our findings are not a *result* of prior contact but rather prior contact is a result of certain pre-existing attitudes.

Discussion

These conclusions stem from the verbal reports and ratings (rather than the actual behaviour) of these particular respondents who are construing with the particular constructs which we supplied. The limitations of this methodology in attitude research have been well documented: for example, the failure of attitude measures reliably to predict behaviour, the influence of normative desirability and other situational factors (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975; Potter & Wetherell, 1987; Wicker, 1969). We cannot avoid the possibility that the study described would be particularly susceptible to eliciting socially desirable, altruistic responses from individuals, particularly those related to predicting acts of charity such as giving money or time to people with a mental handicap. Nevertheless, we can assume that social desirability would operate evenly and the comparison is between posters rather than the presence or absence of posters. Furthermore, many of the constructs relate to feelings evoked by the posters and not predictions of future behaviour.

The generality of these conclusions is, of course, determined by the adequacy of sampling of respondents, constructs, posters and topic area. In terms of the range corollary of personal construct theory (Bannister & Fransella, 1980; Kelly, 1955), 'a construct is convenient for the anticipation of a finite range of events only'. We therefore cannot tell from this study whether people's constructs are necessarily organized in this way for other campaigns or charities, or for disadvantaged groups more generally. However, in this particular case, the overall conclusion for the aims of charity and normalization is that, in the *nomothetic, communal construct system* described here, we cannot have it both ways: if people with a mental handicap are perceived as having the same rights, value and capability as everyone else, then there is a tendency not to support them with charitable financial donations. Put another way, it would appear that normalization has a real price

and the more socially valuing the media images are, the less tolerant the public will be of the special needs of this group in society. This does not describe a conflict within the terms of normalization itself but, rather, it adds emphasis to the irreconcilability of charity *per se* and the principle of normalization. As such, we are describing an example of the conflict between ideology and pragmatism. Given this conclusion what ways forward might there be? We consider below two main suggestions related to charity advertising

(1) *Charities rethink their aims*

Rather than seeking donations from the public, an alternative aim could be to elicit more direct forms of voluntary help. With the development of community care and the community participation of people with a mental handicap, there is an increasing need to promote both acceptance and active involvement by members of the general public. These may therefore be two areas of focus for charity campaigns.

The first has the aim of raising public awareness of the issues and attempts to re-shape public attitudes in a diffuse way. The Spastics Society poster campaign – ‘Our biggest handicap is other people’s attitude’ – is a good example where the message is to do with challenging complacency and the promotion of donations incidental. This approach appears to be based on cognitive-consistency theories (Festinger, 1957; Heider, 1958; Rokeach, 1973) which suggest that attitude change is stimulated by the need to reconcile conflicting percepts – in this case presumably something between ‘I am sensitive to other people’s needs’ and ‘My attitude/behaviour is causing another person distress’. There are many ways in which this format could be exploited such as highlighting the different experiences of handicapped people in the areas of, for example, developing friendships, equal opportunities in education and work, etc.

The literature on effective mass media campaigns also highlights several other important factors which may be used in charity advertising to facilitate effectiveness. These include the targeting of specific audiences, the use of opinion leaders and the presentation of information in such a way as to appear useful or relevant to the lives of the potential audience (Ashmore, 1975). However, two potential pitfalls became apparent in the present study which would need to be avoided. These are the inadvertent reinforcement of stereotypes and incomprehensible imagery. Evidence for both was apparent in the MENCAP posters studied. Many of the images of people used were thought to be unattractive. Whereas physical handicap is more easily indicated, the poster makers have relied either on the characteristic features of Down’s syndrome or rather vacant-looking people photographed in an unsympathetic way to portray mental handicap. The implicit message of ‘different’, ‘unattractive’ and in some cases (according to a few of our subjects) ‘frightening’ does little to challenge the negative stereotype.

The inadvertent reinforcement of prejudices through misperception of an unclear message, or in Wolfensberger’s terms ‘deviancy image juxtaposition’, was also apparent. Some of the subjects commented that the *double entendre* used in poster 10, viz. ‘Jane is wanted by the Police’, could be taken literally unless one bothered to read the very small explanatory print.

In addition to the need for general public acceptance, there is also an increasing need being identified for *actively* involving people such as through one-to-one advocacy, befriending schemes, family links to offer respite care, etc. This could equally be an important focus for publicity campaigns. Ashmore (1975) makes the point that schools

'socialize sympathy for the physically and intellectually handicapped' but that this sympathy is not accompanied by the learning experience which would allow children to feel comfortable with people with handicaps. Not knowing how to behave or what to say in the presence of handicapped people is likely to be a major deterrent to successful integration. Recognizing this, a number of research projects have identified ways of increasing positive attitudes through structured social encounters, equality of status, sanctioned staring and information and guidance on how to act (Acton & Zarbatany, 1988; Langer, Fiske, Taylor & Chanowitz, 1976; McConkey, McCormack & Naughton, 1983, 1984; McCormack & McConkey 1983). In view of this, a mass media poster campaign could only be a starting-point but, if the image presented was more attractive and welcoming, it might be more encouraging for the public to take up opportunities to become more closely involved. In this respect the present study provides some optimism insofar as the negative association between rights and charity is less pronounced for active personal help and stated commitment to spend time with people with a mental handicap.

(2) Review the marketing strategy

In the light of the increasing reliance on charity-led services, the need to raise substantial funds is unlikely to be diminished and therefore pragmatism is likely to win over ideology. In fact, the relaxation of the rules governing television advertising means we are likely to see an increase in the frequency of exposure to promotional campaigns. Commercial sponsorship may also be introduced which could lead to images of people with a mental handicap being associated with inappropriate (in normalization terms) products such as medical aids with all their 'illness' associations. The question therefore that needs to be addressed is whether normalization can be measured in degrees: is it possible to develop effective campaigns in financial terms which are less damaging to the image of individuals with mental handicap? In other words, can we have our cake and eat it too? It is significant that, in spite of their emphasis being educational, the Spastics Society posters elicited more donations from the small pool of subjects in the Stockdale & Farr study when asked to distribute a theoretical £100. This led the authors to conclude that we may be prompted to give money by causes which do not emphasize the need for money but which challenge our prejudices and ignorance with a positive message like the possibility of a fulfilled and happy life (Stockdale & Farr, 1987). Freedman & Sears (1965) have suggested that positive information is more likely to be attended to, especially when commitment to the opinion is low. In other words it may be better to motivate people with a message of potential benefit rather than one of avoidance of guilt. In fact, although the present study did provide some support for the supposition that guilt-arousing messages are effective, we should note a lack of linearity in the relationship here since the research of Bozinoff & Ghingold (1983), which found that advertisements with a 'high guilt' loading were ineffective in bringing about general attitude change or stated commitment to increasing future donations.

A number of sets of guide-lines are available which make practical suggestions for improving media representation of people with a mental handicap (Schearer, 1984; NUJ, undated). Whether more positive representations can be effective financially is an empirical question which has yet to be investigated. The findings of the present study tend to offer a rather pessimistic outlook; however, two points need to be borne in mind. Firstly, the findings of this study do not necessarily generalize to all other posters and it is

possible that a different design could represent people with a mental handicap in more positive ways while still retaining the power to promote donations. This seems to be the case in poster 1 where the message is that people with handicaps have the same feelings as others. Schearer (1984) has shown that the same message can be expressed in positive or negative wording and that it is preferable to emphasize what individuals *can* do and what more a little financial aid could enable them to do rather than play upon people's guilt by stressing inadequacy and handicap. However, whether this approach would be at the cost of donations is unknown due to the lack of empirical evaluation of the impact of charity advertising as highlighted in a recent study published by the Kings Fund (Scott-Parker, 1989). Secondly, the present study only looked at how people *said* they would behave. We recognize the need to further the investigation by conducting a field study on how people *actually* behave.

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